

Earth First! Action Update

No.44 December Yale edition 1997

30p

'Drawn by the Cray of the Winged Wild Goose, the Blind Dogs Gaze' Kohjin Sakamuro (and a Partridge in a Pear Tree)

SMASHING GOOD TIME AT DOE HILL!

Friday 21st October was the last day for submissions to the government's "Operational Coal Review" which had been out for consultation since July. As usual ELF went further than the "normal" channels for making our voices known, deciding that a site occupation would make the point best. Some of us did - others thought maybe even this wouldn't make our voices clear enough.

Some innovative protestations were taken to pass the being sacked, such as swinging mobile phones in silver foil. Mysteriously, the police didn't seem to notice. At 8.15am, a truck and 3 vans all arrived at different points of the Doe Hill House against noise at Tinsdale near Charnock. It's a not a surprise by if I think a particularly notorious company, known for their habit of extending sites in which they have planning permission, that making much larger areas than they would originally be allowed to. At the site at Tinsdale has a site-head - almost unknown for its opposition sites, and a sign that they're clearly planning to reuse that area soon.

As dawn broke, further vehicles arrived from the meeting point in Basildon. A driver of one of the coaches wasn't too happy with the going-on of his clients and tried to get them up to a query worker. Unfortunately he picked a messenger who was, in fact, a suspect who'd been shadowing the area for police before our arrival.

The site was entered in minutes and totally demolished within an hour. Numerous people displaying flags not commonly seen at such an early hour. Several lighting rigs were given flying

lessons, proving that Newton's First Law is alive and crushing Lemmings loaded on in intent. According to the police, the damage was estimated £75,000 and the workers were laid off for a week while equipment was repaired.

As it all happened so quickly, 20 people were off to take over the offices of Harry Banks in nearby Chasetown. Having been persuaded that they'd be able to send a fax to the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions at 12.30 they were all waiting when the cops arrived at 1.30. There were 47 arrests, including a woman with a baby and several people who were only sitting inside. Only 3 people managed to avoid arrest by being in the car park at the time, one of whom had gone out to listen to "The Archers" in his car.

Everyone else reflected for a moment - maybe parking in the car park of the office that was being occupied was not such a good idea.

Everyone was released, but had to change, some after over 24 hours, and had to return in luxury, except for one bloke who had a warrant out. There was a meeting on 18th Nov for everyone who was arrested and there will be another one on 8th December, probably in Sheffield. Phone Lancs ELF 0153675360.



No Comment is a campaign by the National Union of Miners (1979) Ltd, supported by Women Against Pit Closures and by members of the Miners Support Groups which did so much to support the miners during the strike in the 80s and the job closures in the 90s. It emerged in *Together* (Miners' Life) and the TUC's open air night miners' supporters' '97 and continues and by the more than usually frank planning process they decided to take more radical action. Contact 0171 683 1821

GANDALF GETS THREE YEARS...

On Thursday 13th November the GANDALF trial resulted in 3 weeks of "Green Activist" magazine being sentenced to 3 years imprisonment. The State had brought charges against the editors of Green Activist and the Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group Newsletter (hence "GA and ALF") for "conspiracy to incite persons unknown to commit an offence". One ALF/BLF member was found not guilty, and other defendants will be tried at a later date. An appeal is being prepared.

The 3 convicted defendants had mostly been publishing news of a wide range of environmental action in the UK and in other countries by progressive and alternative activists. The court had found this to be subversive, simply reporting direct action news or discussing political questions around it in abstract or new crimes punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment. Passing sentence Judge David Silcock claimed, "Those who oppose such actions and who hope such actions will incite and鼓动 people are, at least in my view, as guilty as those who take part in violent direct action".

Freedom of expression, association and libel/defamation apparently guaranteed by the 1st Charter but the way the conspiracy/incitement laws have been used in the GANDALF case has demonstrated how easily these rights are violated in the UK.

In the wake of the trial Green Activist is being published as usual and some 60 alternative publications have signed up in support of Green Activist and carried statements condemning the GANDALF prosecution. A statement of solidarity signed by over 100 publications and individuals pointed out that: "Without a freedom and fair press there can be no informed discussion and participation in public life. It is not the replacing of laws alone which makes human direct action environmental degradation, animal abuse, economic inequality, attacks on freedom, weapons reports, nuclear weapons, lack of democratic process. These, among many others, are the existing factors".

A public organising meeting has been called by the My-Boil Support Campaign and London Correspondence for all those who wish to help defend and support the independent, radical press and to encourage successful widespread defiance of State censorship and to free the GANDALF 3. The meeting will take place on Wednesday 17th December, 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1 (Holborn tube).

The GANDALF 3 need your letters and support - write to Steve Booth CR4023, Steve Burchall-Wood CR4022 and Neil Mellard CR4021 at HMPP Winchester, Romsey Road SO23 2BF

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NEWS IN BRIEF

There are over 100 West Country activists gathering at some stage or form in Bristol on the weekend of 17th-18th January. Things are still very much at the planning stage - whether it's a big CNY conference or a small get together in a hall depends on how many people want to help. Ideas and help no. 91225 212088

Corporate Watch 5 and 6 is out for £2 (£3 if you are offered it). Includes news, campaign updates, alternative media contacts list and 6 special features on the rainforest media, business, the Ecotree bypass, oil staff, the reformed MAI and lots more.

Three routes have been proposed for a Westway, Whistlers bypass although there is as yet no focus for a campaign against it. Following successful opposition to the development of the A38, the A380 is now set to be 'improved', damaging stretches of countryside. Contact Hilfson EFT 01249 826078

Apna Tat Supplies are activists providing climbing and other gear at cost price. Catalogue Box R, 16 Shobnall Avenue, Leeds LS1 3JB. Tel 0113 262 9363 corporation@apnatac.org

This Land Is Our Land by Mason Shand is a new book looking at land conflict in France and challenging the idea that land can ever be wholly the property of its private owners, arguing instead that land must be shared by all. It also looks at the rise of aboriginal land claims in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Available from Casa Books 0171 222 4919

BPY 'Talk at what you think' web page has the new title of 'How Can We Help?' Available at <http://www.bryant.org/~harry/pj>

Dave Callander, the animal rights activist, recently appealed against a 10 year prison sentence for an action - his sentence was reduced by 2 years, the judge refusing to even consider overturning the conviction. Dave will be eligible for parole next October - is the movement remember that he is as there for us and we are out here for him and all that jazz and went to Dave Callander, HMP Birmingham, Winsor Green Road, Birmingham B16 5AS

On 23-25 Feb 1998, 600 representatives from the People's Global Action against Free Trade and the WTO will meet in Geneva for the first conference of a new world-wide organization of movements against the global market and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Contact Playfair/Basel, Tanner 3,51207 Aachen, Germany Tel +49 241 803792 Email playfair@jasta.rwth-aachen.de

An Oxford student group named *eyebrows* by staging a mock marriage outside the University's Earth Science building. Worried that they might actually be spear-gross, they're also doing research into life on the deep sea bed and global warming. Peacemakers were soon reassured when they arrived and saw the extent of Shell sponsorship. The banner featured a big head with 'Earth Sciences 4 Oil Myopia in Climate Change'.

KINGSTON CAMP

In the latest inner city tree occupation, protesters have taken to the trees in Kingstion, west London to try and prevent 56 poplar trees in Canterbury Gardens, a public riverside walk on the side of the Thames, from being felled. A beach and an oak tree at either end of the line of poplars are not threatened, tree houses have been built in them and in three other poplars walkways are being constructed between all the poplars and the tree houses at the moment.

The poplars must stand between a luxury residential development, under construction, and the River Thames. The council agreed to allow the builder to cut down the trees as part of the consent to the original planning application. However, locals know nothing about this and they were not very happy when they found out that their iconic river walk was going to be spoilt by an ugly encroaching development instead of the ageing but beautiful poplars. The chief planning officer who negotiated the original deal is buying one of the flats in the development!

The next full council meeting is on December 16th. Until then, the Council has agreed to writing that it won't evict but the chances of overturning the decision are extremely slim.

The good news is that the builders must get a filing from the Council before they can even start on Canterbury Gardens. Also, the Council may be obliged to provide details of the terms of the filing license to uninvited parties so campaigners might even get to know the exact details.

Meanwhile Kingston Borough will be putting a Summary Possession Order in the High Court on 17th December

Neatall people, people, people and especially children There is speed to sweep at the foot of the tree. To get there Train from Waterloo to Kingstion and walk north to Canterbury Gardens (1/2 mile) or North London Line in Richmond and cycle south (4 miles) to Canterbury Gardens.

Contact on site website 0378 488237. To get on telephone line Anoncall/Anonymouse 0181 287 3116

OIL-FREE FUTURE

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) activists occupied a derelict central London petrol station in direct response to the already severely undermined Kyoto climate change summit that began on Monday 1st. The occupation, known as STRIKE OIL, was given a rousing send-off on Friday evening by a 350-strong Critical Mass, (complete with pedal-powered sound system). It was not to last and the next weekend in a car-free, corporate-free, community-friendly zone.

There was a steady stream of activists, bobs and locals dropping in throughout the week. Ecologi and Food Not Bombs provided great food initially, and every weekday saw a veggie Car-Free Commute Café along with acoustic music and traffic-free flats. An information stall was set up with practical advice on how to kick our oil habit, and even Bill Clinton, complete with devil's horns, straddled amongst the heavy City Road traffic to distribute Strike Oil! leaflets. Passers-by couldn't fail to notice the banners hung round the three sides of the Liverpool road reading 'DROUGHT, FLOODS, FAMINE, POLLUTION, CORPORATE HELL', 'FOSSIL-FUELS = CLIMATE CHAOS', and 'SUN, WAVE, WIND, BIKE-CORPORATE-FREE'.

A STRIKE OIL spokesperson and 'The Kyoto summit looks like becoming the nadir of human attempts at environmental protection. Yet again world leaders have been belied and belated in their inaction by corporate interests, leaving nothing but bone-dry rhetoric. We believe the time has come to free ourselves from the oil industry's stranglehold on our lives. STRIKE OIL! is a step in that direction, a step that is a celebration of community, clean air and a car-free third millennium.'

LORD SIMON TOLD 'NO' TO PATENTS ON LIFE

On Tuesday 27th November Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Trade and Competitiveness in Europe, Director of RTZ and BP strong, awoke at his house in London to the sight of 12 'extreme activists' looking for footholds on his roof and taking samples from his garden plants. "Fusion power" workers were applied to any remaining bit of living material. As the activists checked out Lord Sainsbury's back garden for biodiversity, others with banners and megaphones asked him to say 'No' to Patents on Life. Sainsbury was due to approve the EU Life Patents Directive that same week.

The EU Life Patents Directive explicitly allows companies to take out patents on life-genes, cells, whole plants and animals and human body parts. The proposed directive has outraged an unprecedented range of groups - from scientists, Third World development workers, environmentalists, plant and animal breeders, human rights activists, politicians, church leaders and consumer groups. The groups oppose the directive on the grounds that it will give monopoly control to multinationals, severely limit medical research, extend multinational power over the South's biodiversity and promote genetic engineering. Contact Genetic Engineering Network 0181 374 8516

NORWEGIAN WHALER SCUTTLED

On November 11, the *Mord*, the 35 foot whaling vessel owned by a Norwegian parliamentarian and whaler, was sunk in Norway. Activists explained that the ship's oil valve was damaged and opened and the vessel sank in several metres of water. Mechanical and electrical damage was extensive.

The *Mord* is the second whaling ship in 12 days to be scuttled in Norway.

Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Society said that the sinkings are a retaliation for Norwegian contempt for the International Whaling Commission's continued global monopoly on commercial whaling. Norwegian delegates walked out of an IWC meeting in Monaco in October to avoid discussion of their country's illegal whaling activities.

The activists are sparing the whalers by being awarded by a campaign of attacks on Norwegian whalers meant to keep Norwegian whalers high and to increase whalers' waste cost for the purpose of impacting the outlaw whaling industry economically. Whales rule!

Earlier this year, the Norwegian government stated that protest against Norwegian whaling is dead and that the international public was accepting their whaling activities.

NO SHOP DAY 1997

This year's International No Shop Day saw hundreds of groups across the planet, and around 50 throughout England, Scotland and Wales take part in actions designed to make the perennial question How Much is enough? Despite the fact that The Independent took exception to the dangerous idea that we might just maybe, need to reduce our consumption of vast quantities of minerals and raw materials if we're going to have a habitable planet for the future, the Manchester protesters took to the streets.

How to Contact the Earth First! Action Update

Post Earth First! Action Update, Dept 29, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1RW. Telephone: 0161 224 4846. E-mail: actionupdate@gn.apc.org. Enclose a SAE for replies. Send us your details if you want to subscribe to the free e-mail service. Earth First! Website address: <http://www.hrc.wm.ac.uk/~hrc/pagialia/earthfirst.htm>

[cont'd]. A new and stirring 'consumer cult' descended upon unsuspecting shoppers the city centre echoed in the sounds of unusually intense self-critising slogans. 'It's a driver's car, not mine!', 'Stop 'til you drop', Ronald McDonald has time for you'. Leaflets invited people to 'join us on our pilgrimage to the sacred temples of spending'. The cult 'members', devotees of the Church of the Raging Profits, were so zealous that shoppers edged away nervously from our leafletters, who had to renounce that this was, in fact, an avowed organised反对 of No Shop Day.

People on the streets seemed uniformly annoyed, confused and sometimes even hostile as they fell into strike on consumer culture - as the message was also taken onto T.V., radio and into the newspapers, and extensive coverage and debate throughout all media.

The basic idea of anticorporatism - that buying ever-increasing amounts of consumer culture is not good for the planet, producers in the third world or anyone's sense of contentment - will no doubt resurface next year... so if you want talk on all the other events that happened or to organise your own next time, contact Enough on 0161 226 6668.

SIX EAST TIMORESE REFUGEES RELEASED

On the sixth anniversary of the Santa Cruz Massacre in East Timor, where at least 275 demonstrators were gunned down by the Indonesian military in 1991, an Timorese and three Portuguese exiled British Aerospace Workers, as part of the ongoing campaign to halt arms sales to Salazar and his regime.

After attempting to bury a child's coffin and commemorating the dead in Timor, the men were arrested and refused to give their names in solidarity with the nameless dead and disappeared in East Timor. At a later court hearing, Special Branch revealed that Salazar had been asked about the identity of the men, and that they had identified two of them.

A campaigner commented, 'These six people, who were on the receiving end of our Hawks and guns, are now here with us in prison for an act of nonviolently remembrance their dead.'

Following 16 days of non-co-operation the Timorese called for a three day hunger strike.

Meanwhile, in East Timor, three women were killed at a demonstration in Dili, also commemorating the Santa Cruz Massacre. Contact 0161 226 6741.

HUNTINGDON LIFE SCIENCE CAMPS

The second camp outside Huntingdon Life Science Laboratories at Cambridge is still going strong on a field around the back of the site. They have established a well run community of people who wish to see an end to the cruel experiments carried out by ILLS but more people are always needed, and welcome. Contact 01953 636433. There are still people in the camp outside the ILLS laboratories in Wimbleton. Support is needed - contact them on 0992 451523.

RTS OXFORD - A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM LAST TIME

Last year Italia's 'em street party in Oxford attracted over 1,000 people and three police officers. Police liaison prior to the event and the ensuing revolts led to softly policing

Local police liaison this year suggested that over again everything would be hunky-dory. Not a lot of it. Sergeant Gardner was overruled by his Superintendant, whose real name is Creanada Dick. Over eighty police, half a dozen horses and a helicopter were on site for the early afternoon gathering. Despite many party goers having been turned away before getting to the meeting point, around four hundred people arrived and were faced with two hundred cordons of police clearly intent on calmly going nowhere. Nevertheless, various 'negotiations' were on and eventually the entire crowd flowed over to the Cowley Road and a party ensued. Dick thought the crowd step back from the Seven. It was wrong.

There was a slight problem with the sound system, however Sgt Gardner said that Kinkydink was perfectly welcome into that party once it became clear that a party was happening, but Kinkydink had already been ousted out of Oxfordshire three hours previously. 'Sparky' - the solar powered backup was safe and well - in the police station car park (and was staying there), so the housing arrived in the shape of the Kingston Sound Newcastle. 'Candy Dell' (the of 'dancing on the walls') - played a superb live set, as did local band Skies and the Lendin' Biscuit who were on hand to cook and suffice, all in a dressed good party.

There have since been all kinds of reminiscences between Oxford RTES and the police, mostly on the latter pages of the local newspaper, how horses charged through the kids area and knifed people flying, for example. Local Council flats have lodged complaints with the Police Complaints Commission for aggressive police control tactics - as much for community policing. It is obvious that Oxford police blew it big time, they tried to stamp a party and couldn't. Possibly though, it was in almost the same spot as last year, with slightly fewer people and fifty times as many police.

The whole street party was filmed by a BBC documentary crew who should be showing footage on BBC2 at 9.30pm on 21st January.

SHELL ACTION

A group of Glasgow activists decided to take Her Majesty the Queen's land and pay Shell Oil a visit on its 100th anniversary. As they magnificently sang the birthday carols and Bongos they had to improvise their own celebration. This involved group D-locking and the main Shell depot, splashing the protesters with red paint and cold beer and tying twenty members of the crew to Kim Saro-Wiwa and his fellow Nigerian activists to the main gate (they were awarded two years and ten days prior to Shell's anniversary).

The gate action allowed another group to gain access uninvited to the top of a storage tank and unfurl a 48 foot 'No blood for oil' banner. The three plucky party goers were duly arrested, charged with breach of the peace and hauled from Shell premises while the gastronomists, shocked at their poor reception from ungrateful Shell employees, left to find a better party!

EVENTS

DECEMBER

8 *Save the date* New wave of guitar workshops in Justine. Contact 01452 822902 to find out more about dates

9 *Party of Drift's* 'Fleaparker and Sixth recyclers' in support of Liverpool Dockers 12.30 - 2pm. Drifters have been raising money while dockers work on their International, Charles Hoare, 3 Regent St SW1, near Piccadilly tube station. Tickets called by CLAMS (Campaign for Labour Against Monopoly) 0181 500 0400, London WC1X 3EE

10 *Castrol AGM* at Novotel London Heathrow, Heathrow, Hounslow TW6 2JG. Contact Phone 081 717 705 1444

11 *Consolidate* outside the US Embassy, Chancery Square, organised by Green Student Network & Students for Environmental Action. 'A US night with posters and speakers' Contact 0171 739 1234

12 *Action to mark* 20 years of East Timor. Contact 0151 264 3741 or 0181 834 0293

13 *Manchester solidarity action* with Liverpool Dockers. Contact Manchester EPF 0161 224 4846

7-14 *A BREED* Europe ELC196101/12, Artistic Collective. Workshops on strategies for sustainable agriculture, models for sustainable development, planning forces such as the EU and the World Trade Organization. Contact A BREED Europe, PO Box 1001, 1990 AB Amsterdam, Netherlands, +31-20-6862238

14-21 *International Revolution Week* Imagine the revolution has happened! What will you do with all that extra electricity? What are there no more jobs? What are there no more rules? Are you ready for it?

17 *Public organising* to support independent press, exchange and information, and the GANDALF, 77a Commercial Rd, Red Lion Square, London (Holborn tube). Contact McLeish 0171 513 1249

26 *Anti consumerism* in Didsbury, Manchester. Contact Didsbury EPF 0161 822 5112

28-31 *Tatton Park Camp* Mylester Mylester - a weekend of music, protest, music and action. Contact 0161 8229901

31 *Solidarity party* in the Wimbleton camp outside Huntingdon Life Sciences. Contact 01992 451523

JANUARY

17-18 *West Country EPF* strategic gathering. Contact 01225 312488

More things to do

CONSUME CONSUME CONSUME 'Dancing as the Basis of Multicultural Corporations', 'Ruff Raft', and other of your favours. Casey Neff books are available from the EPF. AU on tapes (1.5) and CD (5.5) + £1 postage. Make cheques payable to Earth Fest! All profits from the sale will go to the Action Update. 0161 224 4846

Investors Join us in protest at Manchester airport charges. Letters welcome! John Davies, CH 4339, 1-wing 4-2B, JMF Liverpool, Mersey, Liverpool, L9 1DF

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1997 BILLBOARD BLACKOUT CHAMPIONSHIPS

UK plc had the good fortune of being selected to host the world's first ever Billboard Blackout Championships in the weeks leading up to this year's No Shop Day. Subversives delisted brand names and trash corporate images from billboards nationally to create 'All Free Zones'. Teams were invited to enter for this 'full-on, full-normal attack on planet crushing consumerism', with a suggestion that they divide up their town or city between teams. Entries included blacked-out writing on adverts and subversive slogans. The closing date for the competition is in-unctioned.

NUCLEAR NEWS

Farlane Trident campaigners started the month by twice stopping a nuclear convoy carrying eight warheads. In the ten people jumped over a grassy wall and hurried breathlessly in front of the lorries. The D-bombed warheads and one protestor climbed on top of the carrier. The convoy was held up for thirty minutes and four people got arrested. Later on in Walsall there were banners, pamphlets and three more arrests. One protestor was tackled to the ground, having his glasses smashed and was refused access to a doctor for his wounds.

RECLAIM THE STREETS GOES GLOBAL

Road rage became real live across the globe as major streets in Australia, France and Berlin were rechristened on the same date as the Oxford event. The Sydney street party was the first of its kind in Australia and was a major celebration while in Lyons, France, a few hundred people donned black gear and paraded through the streets. They sang funeral dirges and dragged a shamed car with Death on top, who cried the air with her sobs. "L'avis, c'est le mort" (the car is death) and "L'avis, on peut, on ne fait pas de politi" (he can't work, kill and pollute) they silently sang.

The procession stopped at a busy road with narrow pavements crammed with people and undercarriage signs were powerless to prevent the dead car being dragged across the streets. A trap was set up at the other end, and bar the black and red ketchup-spattered people dead on the road, a festive atmosphere ensued with acoustic music, dancing with, leaflets, just-mentioned symbols and flowers. For Lyons RT5 contact Collectif des Rues Libérées +33-4-72.00.23.37 rgene@amboin11.net

BARRY HORNE TO APPEAL

On 12th November, after a 10 day trial, a jury found Harry Horne guilty of six charges of arson and attempted arson on the site of Wright in 1994. Sentence has been adjourned until Friday 5th December for pre-sentence reports.

Barry had pleaded guilty to attempted arson at Bristol in 1990 but the prosecution case was that the devices were similar to those used in the tale of Wright attacks that the same person was responsible for both. Both the judge and the prosecution accepted that all the evidence linking the two attacks was circumstantial, there was no fingerprint or any other forensic evidence, a photograph was released shortly after the tale of Wright attacks but no resemblance to Barry, and Forensic eye-witnesses failed to pick out Harry on ID parades. Despite all this the judge stated that there was an absence of evidence.

After the verdict Barry's lawyer immediately announced that he would be appealing, mainly on the grounds that the judge misdirected the jury on some crucial points. Barry's sentencing will take place at Bristol Crown Court on Friday 5th December. Contact the Barry Horne Support Campaign 0976 280724.

GREENPEACE OCCUPIES SHIPMENT OF GENETIC SOYA

Earlier this month Greenpeace occupied a shipment of genetically engineered soya at the ADM (Archers Daniels Midland) terminal in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, as part of a new Green Guard Patent of Europe.

To alert the public to this contamination of their food supply Greenpeace Genetic Hazard Panels will begin displays of genetically altered soya and meat coming from the US into the European Union. This year's US soya harvest is 13% of the total crop, in 1996 it was only 1.2%. Soya beans are used in about 80 percent of processed food products sold in supermarkets. Contact Genetic Engineering Network 0811 374 9516

ACTIVISTS' EXCHANGE WITH PENNSYLVANIA?

A Pennsylvania project known as the Allegheny Defense Project (ADP) is interested in doing an activists' exchange with a UK group. The ADP describes itself as "a bio-ecological organization dedicated to finding community-based solutions for restoring the ecological integrity and building sustainable economies benefiting the health of all forest communities on the Allegheny National Forest". Please. They deal mostly with the US Forest Service's

management and international timber baron's clearing of US National Forests. The nature and content of the exchange would be up to those taking part. Contact Philadelphia ADP contact, 1227 Heather Road, Ambler, Pa 19002, USA (484) 226 4918 adp@envirolink.org

HAPPY CAMPING ON BIRMINGHAM NORTHERN RELIEF ROAD ROUTE

A camp has been set up on the route of the proposed Birmingham Northern Relief Road. The site is relatively desolate as it principally a starting site to introduce people already involved in the campaign to northern direct action and to inform others. Although construction isn't due to start for about 14 months, hopes to raise the political and financial profile of the campaign have already paid off. Since the camp was set up the campaign has been in local or national media every day. To date the site features a couple of campers and a roundhouse which acts as an information centre. "We want yet" according to its creators.

The 22 miles wide Birmingham Northern Relief Road will be Britain's first privately owned toll motorway although research has already suggested that the road will not be economically viable. The Department of Transport's own figures predict that the road will actually increase congestion northwards on the M6 by 40%. The Highway Agency are therefore planning to spend £415million of public money on widening the M6 to cope with the extra traffic, all part of the London to Manchester superhighway and European to Dublin.

Despite winter's icy blizzards remain high and others are welcome to join. If you're feeling adventurous and just very, very bored then perhaps you'd like to come and spend a while on site. Experience the thrill of living in the trees, the excitement of cooking over an open fire, the exhilarating stimulation of conversations about whether human is better than sheep. They also promise not to sing Bob Dylan songs but there are no丝毫 whistles raised to power as yet. For directions and further info contact 0197 0301978.

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The Multilateral Agreement on Investment

(The following is adapted from an article in Winter 97 Corporate Watch)

The proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is the latest step in the globalisation of the world economy. It is the invention of the OECD which provides research and analysis on economic conditions in order to assist its members' development. It is less well known for its role in setting rules and regulations.

The MAI will be a treaty between signatory nations that will signal a further opening up of markets. It provides a single predictable set of rules to replace the myriad bi-lateral agreements between countries and as such will replace all previous agreements that have been made between signatory states and will over-rule all laws that conflict with it. It endorses the right to own or acquire any asset, related rights such as the ability to operate a business, and the freedom to transfer funds and capital as and when desired. The only notable sector exempted from the scope of the agreement is defence.

The stated intention is somewhat sounding enough to level the playing field for all investors so that all parties be they small local companies or giant transnationals will be treated equally regardless of nationality. The bulk of the MAI is devoted to specific ways of preventing discrimination. Any and all performance requirements on investors will be banned. Under the terms of the agreement kinds of obligations on investors (amongst others) which are specifically outlawed include prescribed levels of export of goods even though a nation's balance of payments may suffer, setting required levels of domestic content in the products of an enterprise, the transfer of technology or other proprietary knowledge to the local community, requiring that enterprises must be joint ventures with local partners, to achieve a given level or value of production, investment, manufacturing, sales, employment or R&D within a nation's territory.

In short, some of the obligations that are traditionally used in practice and manage local economies may be placed on an investor. Furthermore governments will be forced from interfering with companies because of the nature of their operations elsewhere in the world. If a company exploits slave labour in Burma no government may take this as grounds to hinder or in any way interfere with their free entry into a market.

TNCs will be free to bring into a country the personnel they choose. Old obligations will also be violated that will require the remuneration of investors in the event of their assets being expropriated or confiscated.

Much of the document comprises a long list of prohibitions, imposing limitations on the power of central and regional government to regulate the actions of business. The MAI goes a great deal further than previous treaties which have maintained the sovereignty of national governments to manage their own economies in line with their developmental objectives. Yet there are further provisions giving even greater power to investors.

A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR TRANSNATIONALS

The MAI grants investors the right to directly challenge national and local laws when they are deemed to be in breach of MAI provisions, and cause, or are likely to cause loss or damage to an investor or investment. This may lead to absurd situations of cash-strapped local government being vulnerable to legal action directly from TNCs which have far greater resources.

Rules are provided for settling government-to-government disputes and for investor-to-government disputes. No reciprocal mechanism is provided for taking legal action against TNCs, a point that has been made much of by campaigners against the agreement. The reason for that is very simple. There is nothing in the agreement that an investor could be found in breach of. The MAI constitutes a bill of rights for transnational investors, but whilst it bestows new rights and freedoms on investors there are no responsibilities or obligations placed upon them.

Further sections of the agreement provide for a 'rollback' of existing legislation that conflicts with the MAI and a 'standstill' mechanism preventing the enactment of new legislation.

No nation will be allowed to withdraw from the agreement for at least five years after it is signed. All existing investments will be covered by the full range of protections for a further fifteen years after withdrawal.

How the MAI will work out cannot be precisely predicted. The world has never had such a far-reaching agreement before but in every one of the hundred or so cases brought before it in its three years, the WTO has ruled in favour of corporate interests. There is little reason to imagine that MAI procedures will be any less partisan.

OPPOSITION GROWS

So many special exemptions from the scope of the MAI have been filed that the negotiations, due to finish in May 1997, have been dramatically slowed. Few governments, except it seems the UK's, are actually bold enough to believe their own rhetoric about free markets. America, the most vocal champion of free trade and yet traditionally the most protectionist of capital economies, has produced the longest list of exemptions and has the muscle to insist on them. The UK delegation, by contrast, has now dropped its one proposed exemption of fishing rights.

Worldwide, a coalition of NGOs has formed to try to stop the negotiations and is led in the UK by the World Development Movement, Friends of the Earth, Oxfam and the WWF. Focusing on environmental and labour issues, these groups are highlighting the dangers of deregulation. One of the chief concerns is that as capital is given greater mobility countries are put under pressure to provide the most favourable conditions to investors. Across Europe countries have been dropping corporation tax and deregulating the labour market for years in an effort to attract foreign investment. At the same time there is a tendency for the most polluting and labour intensive industries to shift to countries with lower standards and costs. Exactly the same phenomenon has been occurring within the NAFTA area.

Much of the 'developing' world is expressing deep concern about the OECD's plans. Their fear is that the MAI will not stay within the OECD nations, but will form the basis for a global agreement. Also developing nations will be under pressure to sign up to the MAI on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, without having had any input into its design. If they do not sign up investment can simply go elsewhere.

THE CAMPAIGN

In October this year the NGO coalition convened in Paris to consult with the OECD. The group of NGOs, 29 strong, issued an ultimatum. If their list of eight demands was not met, they would denounce their combined resources to campaign against the MAI. Their demands included the immediate halting of negotiations, independent assessments of likely environmental and social impacts, and the incorporation of binding regulations on transnational investors. They were ignored.

FAILURE OF GLOBAL REGULATION

After intense lobbying by the NGOs the British government is now pushing to have the OECD's 'Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises' closely associated with the MAI. Unfortunately the guidelines are purely voluntary and non-binding. There are no binding environmental regulations in effect today that impose obligations or responsibilities on the multinationals. At a global level there are still no guidelines, even voluntary ones, regarding the conduct of TNCs.

THE POST DEMOCRATIC WORLD

If enacted, the MAI will inevitably spell further degradation of environments and societies, by further deregulating the activities of TNCs. It will also increase the power of the corporations at the expense of elected governments. For national governments to sign away their own power seems, at first, highly unlikely. On the other hand, perhaps it betrays the true nature of the relationship between government and industry in the rich nations. Could that be why there has been no public consultation?

Negotiations at the OECD began in 1993 and were intended to conclude in May 1997. Throughout they were conducted in absolute secrecy with minimal media coverage. It was only in late 1996 after leaked drafts of the report were published on the internet that the NGOs were allowed consultations with the OECD. The CBI however, which is affiliated to the Business and Industry Advisory Council - the OECD's business lobby - reports that industry groups have been actively involved in lobbying for such an agreement since the early '90s.

It is sound reasonable to conclude that in the quest to create what one OECD spokesperson describes as "the constitution of a single global economy" democracy has become an expendable notion.

